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Price from
£119.95
per person



3 days, Friday departures
until March 2012

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Included in the price:

- Return standard class rail travel to London from Birmingham International or Birmingham New Street
- 2 nights stay at a choice of 4 star London hotels with breakfast
- Free time in London for shopping and sight-seeing

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Price from
£159.95
per person

3 days, Friday departures
until March 2012

Choose a top West End show from our fabulous selection which includes Billy Elliot, Blood Brothers, Dreamboats and Petticoats, Ghost The Musical, Jersey Boys, Legally Blonde, Les Misérables, Mamma Mia!, Phantom of the Opera, Shrek The Musical, The Lion King, The Wizard of Oz, War Horse, Wicked and more!

Included in the price:

- Return standard class rail travel to London from Birmingham International or Birmingham New Street
- A top priced ticket for a Friday evening performance of the show of your choice from our fabulous selection
- 2 nights stay at a choice of 4 star London hotels with breakfast
- Free time in London for shopping and sight-seeing

Organised by Omega Holidays, ABTA V4782.
Single supplements apply. Subject to availability.

For more information
or to book, please call:

01524 37500 quote BPM

OPENING TIMES: MON-FRI 9.30-19.30
SAT 9.45-15.30 SUN 10.00-15.00

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Travel

Exploring the Broads by car*



* Except for a short trip on the Southern Comfort paddle boat down the River Bure where we glimpsed megabucks, thatched-roof houses, a windpump that was converted into holiday accommodation in the 1930s and a traditional Broads wherry boat.

British Break

By Adrian Caffery

AVID readers of these travel pages may recall that my boating holidays are never without incident.

There was the time when traffic backed up after someone (me) couldn't work out how to raise the barriers at the Shirley drawbridge on the Stratford Canal.

Then there was the time, near the famous Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, when we drifted into the path of other boats after someone (that'll be me) failed to tie a proper knot in the mooring ropes.

And there was the time, unreported until now, when my wife fell from a towpath into the Brecon Canal after someone (yes, me again) didn't throw her enough rope as we attempted to moor.

So it was no surprise when Mrs C, still scarred by events in Wales, took exception to my plan for a boating holiday on the Norfolk Broads. It was a case of Norfolk yes, boats no, no, no.

Never one to rock the boat, so to speak, I booked a property through Norfolk Country Cottages and discovered, to my delight, that you don't need to set sail to explore the Broads.

Watts Cottage is in the very peaceful, one-pub village of Upton, ten miles east of bustling Norwich and two miles north of the small town of Acle, which has a couple of supermarkets.

The village, on the River Bure and on the edge of Upton Broad, is well placed for anyone wanting to discover the wetland's lakes, marshes, windpumps, dykes and 125 miles of navigable waters.

A short drive away is Fairhaven Water Gardens, a secret hideaway of woodland walks leading to South Walsham Inner Broad – and there's free entry for Watts Cottage guests.

A little further down the road is Ranworth Church – celebrated as the 'Cathedral of the Broads' – where the brave and agile can climb its tower for terrific views of Malthouse Broad.

Close by, at the end of a wind-



Set sail: A windpump at Thurne.

BroadsFactfile

THE Norfolk Broads are shallow lakes connected by an intricate network of rivers or smaller streams.

The lakes were created when sea levels rose, flooding the peat pits dug since Roman times, despite the construction of windpumps and dykes to hold back the water.

Admiral Nelson learned to sail on the Broads.

ing wooden path through reed beds, is a thatched, floating wildlife centre with a viewing gallery across Ranworth Broad, a nature reserve that's closed to traffic.

Of course, we were not confined to dry land and just past the picture postcard village of Woodbastwick we parked up and hailed a river taxi to take us to the Ferry Inn in Horning.

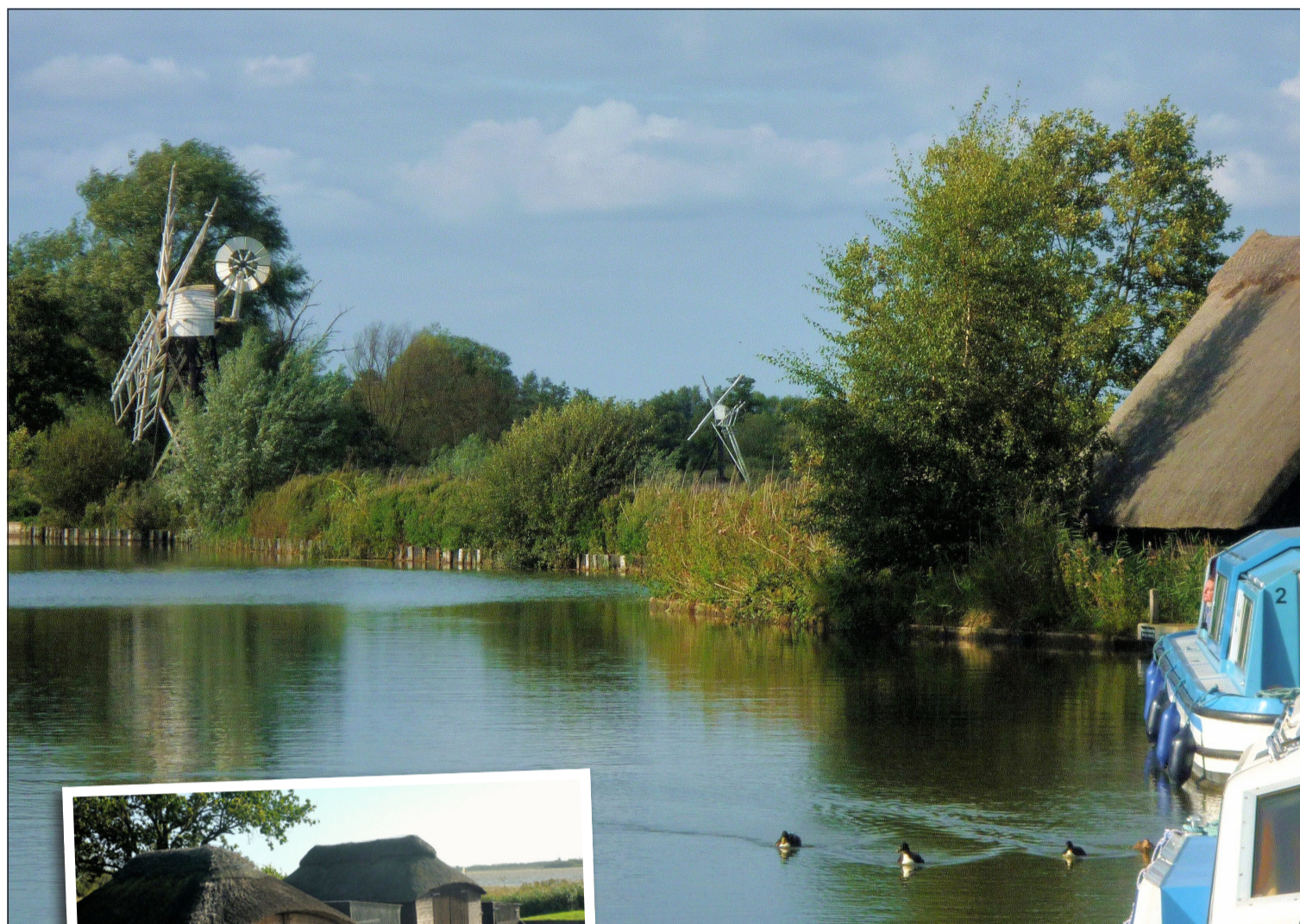
The Inn was largely destroyed in a Second World War bombing raid by the German Luftwaffe, killing 22 people including some pilots stationed at nearby RAF Coltishall.

Horning itself is perhaps the prettiest of all the Broads villages with pubs, tea-rooms and a lovely village green all on the riverside.

Best of all, it's home to The Southern Comfort, a Mississippi-style paddle boat which we boarded (after some cajoling of Mrs C) for a one-and-a-half hour trip.

The commentary was informative and amusing and the thatched riverside properties we passed were simply stunning – a real glimpse into how the other half live.

Along the way we passed a wherry, a traditional Broads



GettingThere



NORFOLK Country Cottages has been providing self-catering accommodation for 20 years and its 2012 brochure features the widest choice in the region. There are more than 400 properties of all styles and sizes ranging from chocolate-box country cottages and traditional seaside townhouses to designer barn conversions and chic city apartments in Norwich. All are VisitEngland graded – with many holding a coveted gold award – and more than half welcome pets. Short breaks are available at most properties. The 4-star, two-bedroom Watts Cottage costs from £373 to £665 for a week, £280 to £499 for a short break. To receive a brochure call 01603 871872. To take a virtual tour of the properties and to check availability and prices visit www.norfolkcottages.co.uk

Broads minded: From top, windpumps at How Hill, thatched boathouses at Hickling, views from Ranworth Church tower and close encounters at Thrigby Hall Wildlife Gardens, Filby.



cargo boat with black sails on a hinged mast, only a handful of which have been preserved as pleasure boats.

Further afield, at How Hill, we visited an old marshman's family home that's now a museum, while at Hickling Broad we were charmed by the many thatched boat houses.

The Broads extend to Norfolk's east coast where you can climb to the top of Horsey Windpump, now in the care of the National

Trust, for views over Horsey Mere.

The windpump was abandoned in 1943 after being struck by lightning during a storm so fierce that the operator became entangled in the machinery and was crushed to death.

It is said his screams can still be heard on a gusty night!

Of course, there's more to Norfolk than the Broads.

There are sandy beaches all along the coast and the tradi-

tional seaside resorts of Sea Palling, Caister and Great Yarmouth are within easy reach of Upton village.

One of the most remarkable beaches is near Horsey where a colony of grey seals fish yards from the shoreline and give birth to their pups on the sands in December and January.

Also close to Upton is Thrigby Hall Wildlife Gardens where there are some imaginative tree-top walks and visitors are able to

get up close to big cats and an adorable family of gibbons.

After our day outs, it was great to return to Watts Cottage, which has a well equipped kitchen and attractive sitting room featuring a woodburner (starter pack of fuel provided).

But the cottage's main selling points are its huge conservatory and private garden with barbecue, patio and furniture. And, as Mrs C was quick to point out, you don't get those with a boat.

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New Year Party Cruise on the River Thames

Price from **£269.95** per person

3 days
Departing Friday 30 December 2011

Included in the price:

- An evening river cruise and party on the River Thames on New Year's Eve with refreshments
- 2 nights stay at a 4 star outer London hotel
- Dinner on Friday 30 December 2011 followed by a disco
- Dinner on New Year's Eve
- Full English breakfast on Sat 31 Dec 2011 and Sun 1 Jan 2012
- Free time in London and Windsor
- Return coach travel from Birmingham, Solihull & Sutton Coldfield

Organized by Omega Holidays, ABTA V4782. Single supplement applies. Subject to availability. Please note local pick ups are operated subject to a minimum number of passengers.

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